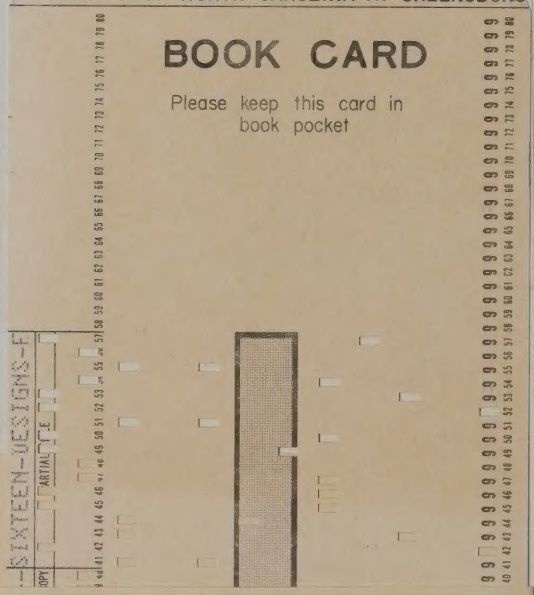
Jackson Library -UNCG
ff PN2067 .R8 c.1 NGUV
Rutherston / Sixteen designs for the theatre.
3 0510 0524568$

The Woman's College of
The University of North Carolina
LIBRARY

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

BOOK CARD

Please keep this card in
book pocket



University of North Carolina at
Greensboro, North Carolina 27412

Walter Clinton Jackson Library

Date Due

OCT 5 1993 #
OCT - 7 PAID $

SIXTEEN DESIGNS FOR THE THEATRE

THIS EDITION IS
LIMITED TO 475
COPIES FOR SALE
OF WHICH THIS IS
NUMBER 253.

SIXTEEN DESIGNS FOR THE THEATRE

By ALBERT RUTHERSTON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD
MCMXXVIII

PRINTED IN ENGLAND

ff
PN
2067
R8

To M. R. *in*
affectionate homage and
for the memory of her
CELIA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM for permission kindly given to reproduce plates Nos. 2, 5, and 14; to LADY KEEBLE for plates Nos. 6, 7, and 9; to MR. DESMOND COKE for plate No. 12, and to MR. AND MRS. CHARLES TENNYSON for their courtesy in having lent the original design for the purpose of making plate No. 8.

CONTENTS

List of Plates 11

Introduction 13

Plates 17

LIST OF PLATES

1 Costume Design for CUPID, LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE. *In the possession of the artist*

2 Costume Design for AURORE, LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE. *Victoria and Albert Museum*

3 Costume Design for JENNIFER, THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA. *In the possession of the artist*

4 Design for a CURTAIN SCENE, to hang in folds, for the jungle; ANDROCLES AND THE LION. *In the possession of the artist*

5 Costume Design for HERMIONE, THE WINTER'S TALE. *Victoria and Albert Museum*

6 Costume Design for TIME, THE WINTER'S TALE. *In the possession of Lady Keeble*

7 Costume Design for PAULINA, THE WINTER'S TALE. *In the possession of Lady Keeble*

8 MIMES, a group of characters for THE WINTER'S TALE. *In the possession of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Tennyson*

9 Costume Design for FLORIZEL, THE WINTER'S TAL E. *In the possession of Lady Keeble*

10 Costume Designs for two BACCHANTES, LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE. *In the possession of the artist*

11 Costume Designs for CLOWN and a PEASANT GIRL, THE WINTER'S TALE. *In the possession of the artist*

12 Costume Design for FLORE, LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE. *In the possession of Desmond Coke, Esq.*

13 Costume Design for AQUILON, LE RÉVEIL DE FLOR E. *In the possession of the artist*

14 Design for CURTAIN SCENE, to hang in folds; LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE. *Victoria and Albert Museum*

15 Costume Design for HEBE, LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE. *In the possession of the artist*

16 Costume Design for DIANA, LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE. *In the possession of the artist*

THE WINTER'S TALE was produced by Mr. Harley Granville-Barker at the Savoy Theatre, 1912. ANDROCLES AND THE LION, by G. B. Shaw, also THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA, were produced by Mr. Granville-Barker during the following year, 1913, at the St. James's Theatre. LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE, a ballet, was produced by Madame Anna Pavlova in New York, 1914.

INTRODUCTION

THE sixteen designs reproduced in this volume by the kindness of Mr. Humphrey Milford were made during the years 1912–14, when I had the happiness to be engaged in designing for the theatre on a considerable scale. Two years cannot make a finished apprentice, much less a journeyman, in one of the most difficult, elaborate, and complicated of the Arts. But all that could be was forced within those narrow limits by the courageous and brilliant management of Mr. Harley Granville-Barker at the Savoy and St. James's Theatres. I must plead for these designs therefore the excuse of lack of experience in a medium involving the grasp of a hundred questions not normally related to design as such. I cannot pretend that in a longer time and with further experience they could not have been bettered. I recognized, however, that ideas of theatrical design can only be realized by actual production in the proscenium opening. In the absence of such further opportunity to project my ideas, improved by experiment, it seemed at least worth while to offer these early drawings. They have passed the test, not of time indeed—they are both too young and too old for that—but of having proved fit, in some small degree, for the purpose for which they were made; they pretend to no other qualities.

To enter the theatre as a designer when one's chief work hitherto has lain outside it, is to step into a world full of aesthetic temptation. Nothing is easier than to begin by making drawings which look full of attractive qualities. The temptation to linger happily over enriching the individual design with elaborate detail, attempting to make of it a work of art in itself, is almost irresistible. What could be more natural when so pleasantly employed, than to forget to make certain in advance by what means or process, with what materials, we propose to translate these drawings into terms of concrete scene, property, or costume? There is the important question of movement also, the thing that is most apt to upset the neatest-patterned of designs. A clear conception of our task must have been thought out before we begin to make any drawings of a precise nature. The designer, therefore, must learn that he is there, not for his own glory or reputation or to amuse himself by making pretty drawings, but, by an intelligent use of his gifts, to interpret dramatically the particular work to be presented.

It is because of this last necessity, perhaps, that it is sometimes said that no artist-designer, in the ordinary meaning of the term, should be called from outside to work in the theatre, however great his enthusiasm. He is too apt, it is suggested, to think pictorially or in terms of detailed design only; by training and inclination he is presumed to be ill-equipped to fill a place in helping the expression of what is a different art altogether, an art requiring life-long study and devotion to itself. That both logically and theoretically there should be much truth in this point of view cannot be denied; but it must also be admitted that,

in practice, the theatre in England as it exists at the present time, has failed signally—if we make exception of the rare genius of Mr. Edward Gordon Craig, of which it unaccountably fails to take advantage—to produce from within itself designers of outstanding merit or real vision.

The possible reasons for this are many. Others far better equipped than myself have written, and no doubt will continue to write exhaustively on this subject, which comes within the wider problems of the tradition, status, and tendencies of our theatre; matters outside the purpose of this introduction. It must at least be admitted that the theatre which should produce its own designers[1] from within itself, fails, broadly speaking, to do so. Hence, on occasion, the independent artist-designer is called upon to play his part. Since this is so and since in the work of such artists as Mr. William Nicholson, Mr. Charles Ricketts, Mr. Norman Wilkinson of Four Oaks, to mention only a few names, we see the admirable help it is possible to lend the theatre, our theatre may yet find occasion to enlarge the circle of its *invités* by a still more generous use of the talent that waits ready to its hand. Mr. T. E. Lowinsky, Mr. McKnight Kauffer, Mr. Duncan Grant, Mr. Paul Nash, and Mr. Randolph Schwabe are among those whose work possesses just those qualities of which the theatre might so well take advantage. It is true that both Mr. Nash[2] and Mr. Schwabe [3] have already been chosen to try their wings, in each case with conspicuous success. Since then too many years have elapsed, both for them and for ourselves, without further opportunity being offered. Mr. Kauffer[4] in particular had considerable training in the theatre during his earlier career in the United States of America—an experience by which we might have benefited. Mr. Grant has designed for the theatre in Paris, his *Twelfth Night* at *Le Vieux Colombier* being a memorable piece of work.[5]

A conspiracy of mystery appears to surround most things connected with our theatre. This is natural, perhaps, when so much make-believe is a necessary function of its life; but this atmosphere need not be allowed to obscure our estimation of its professions or status. In the matter of designing for the theatre, it is no more difficult for an able artist of sensitive vision to attempt to bring certain aesthetic qualities to life within the proscenium,

[1] The English theatre produces scenic artists of great skill, knowledge, and distinction, whose work I hold in esteem and admiration. The art of scene-painting is an altogether different one from that of designing.

[2] The *Truth About the Russian Ballet* by Sir James Barrie. Scene and Costumes designed by Paul Nash. The London Coliseum, 1920. Produced by Sir Gerald du Maurier.

[3] *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare. Costumes designed by Randolph Schwabe. Lyric Theatre, London, 1919. Produced by Mr. Basil Sydney with Miss Doris Keane. Everyman Theatre, London, 1920. Produced by Mr. Norman Macdermott. Mr. Schwabe also designed the costumes for Mr. Bridges Adams's production of *The Loving Heart* by Henrietta Leslie, Duke of York's Theatre, and individual dresses for *The Enchanted Cottage* by Sir Arthur Pinero, produced by Mr. Owen Nares at the St. Martin's Theatre in 1920.

[4] Mr. Kauffer devoted six years to work within the theatre at this period.

[5] Mr. Granville-Barker during his management at the Savoy Theatre, invited Mr. Grant to design the costumes for *Macbeth*. The War brought this period of management to a close, whilst plans for its production were still proceeding.

than to do so on wall or canvas. Precisely the same qualities of imagination and knowledge, in relation to the problem to be solved, are brought into play. Thus for the artist-designer without previous practical experience in the theatre, the chief difficulty appears to me to be one of medium. Possessed of knowledge in his own particular art he is used to the expression of form, to understand light and shade, to judge true colour values; he has spent his life in the study of these things. And to have gained a sufficient mastery over form through which to express ideas, is a key that will open many locks. The theatre, in my opinion, offers no difficulties technical or otherwise which the designer so equipped may not with time and experience overcome.

Indeed the one insurmountable difficulty for those tempted by love of the theatre to work for it is opportunity, since our theatre, with rare exceptions,[1] offers all too little opening; another of its little mysteries, perhaps, into which I will not attempt to pry here. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough how important a part experience plays in enabling the designer to arrive at a satisfactory result in the theatre. In most other forms of art we are able to estimate our work step by step at each separate stage from start to finish; we thus control it in the fullest sense neither do idea nor matter part company during its progress. In the theatre the reverse is the case; at best we see in piecemeal form the work we are engaged upon, and only when the curtain rises does the designer see it for the first time as a whole, as a completed idea. Only then is he able to observe, modify, correct, and learn, with a view to future opportunity, hoping next time to do a little better, advance a little further, achieve some small measure of perfection by his share in a co-operative task.

Thus far the point of view of the artist. The theatre itself, its art, its wealth or poverty of ideas, its resources, both latent or revealed upon which it should rely to move, impress, teach, or amuse us, of its values commercial or aesthetic, these are things outside my province. Nor have I wished to touch on the position as between the designer and the theatre. Any service well and honourably carried out should have importance in an art, for whose expression so many varieties of talent are required. That there are degrees of service we must all readily admit; for the theatre to be well and not poorly served is what appears to matter. The central inspiration will, in a play stamped with a great personality, such as that of Shakespeare or Mr. Shaw, be the author's, but it may equally be derived from the genius of the designer himself as in the case of a masque by Mr. Craig, or even in the case of the lighter forms of theatre craft from the fine sense of adventure displayed by Mr. C. B. Cochran. No categorical classification is possible. The dominating necessity is to serve the theatre as a whole, and it does not matter whence the wind of inspiration has blown. What is supremely important is that all who serve the theatre should combine to follow where that wind listeth.

[1] Mr. Nigel Playfair with the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith; Sir Barry Jackson with the Birmingham Repertory Theatre; Mr. C. B. Cochran, Miss Sybil Thorndyke, and Mr. Lewis Casson, should be mentioned as among the exceptions. Mr. Harley Granville-Barker has retired from active life in the theatre.

In conclusion one other aspect bearing on the question of the designer may, perhaps, be mentioned here. The rapid growth of recent years in both town and village throughout England, of groups of players, small theatres, and theatre societies, should encourage the birth of good designers from among their ranks. And this, one hopes, may lead finally to important results. These little theatres and societies of players, offer no mean school of apprenticeship. They are unhampered by unwieldy tradition or the exigencies of purely commercial interests, they are called into being simply by enthusiasm for drama, they are solely dependent upon local imagination and ingenuity from start to finish; and their slender funds impose simplicity of material for the furnishing of stage or platform.

And for myself, I find it pleasant to think that we may have here in embryo, a future school of theatre designers. To learn to think naturally in terms of the theatre, to design with a full appreciation of the use to which the drawing, when made, is to be put, so that both the method of making and the materials to be employed are clearly allowed for, are the essential things.

October 1927 ALBERT RUTHERSTON.

THE PLATES

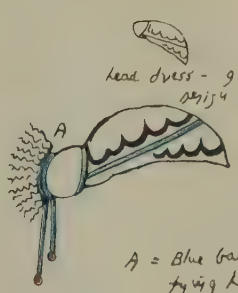
1. CUPID
LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE

No 10
"Cupid"

2. AURORE
LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE

No 6.

"Aurore"



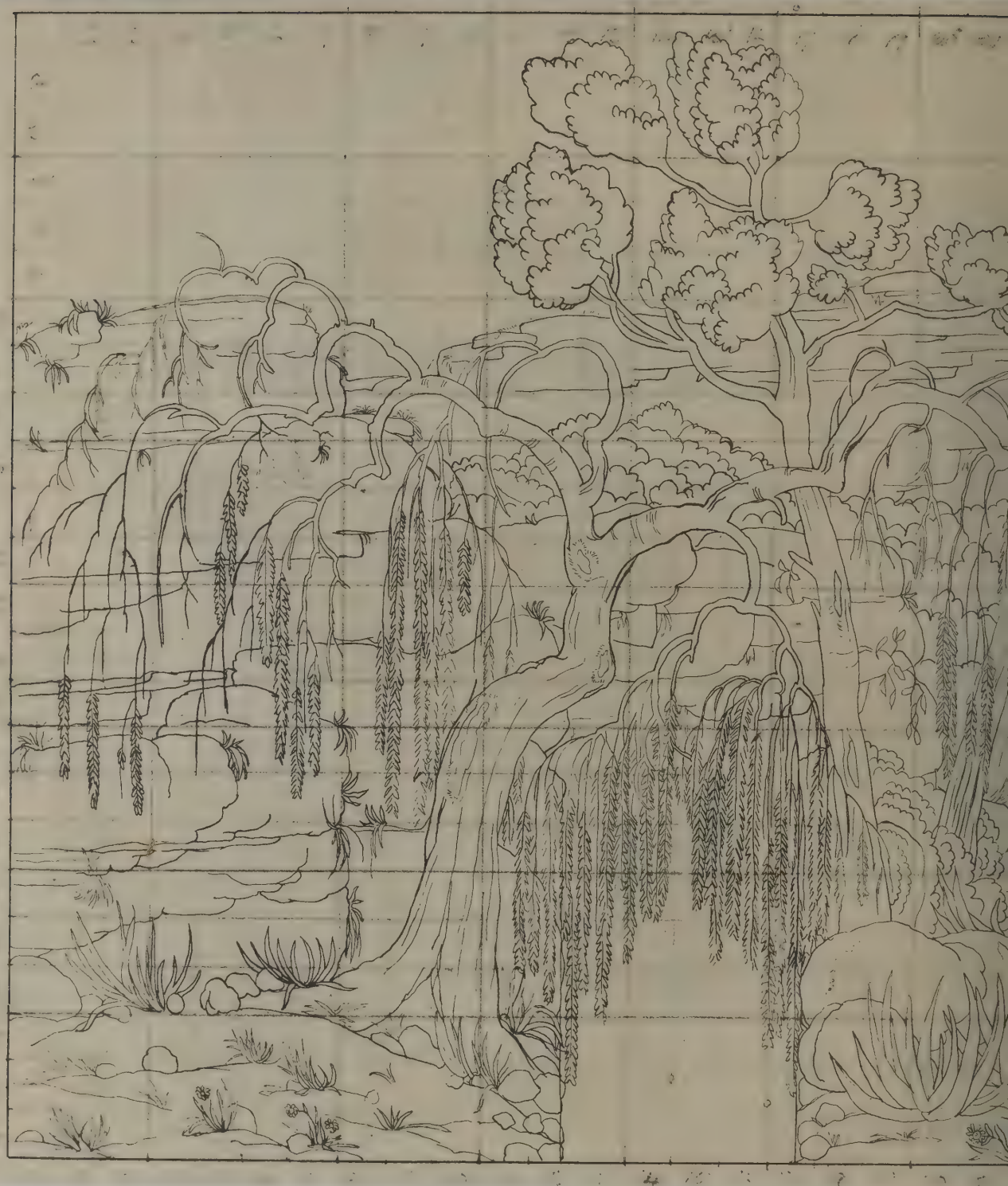
Head dress - gold cloth. edged Black appliqué & Glue.

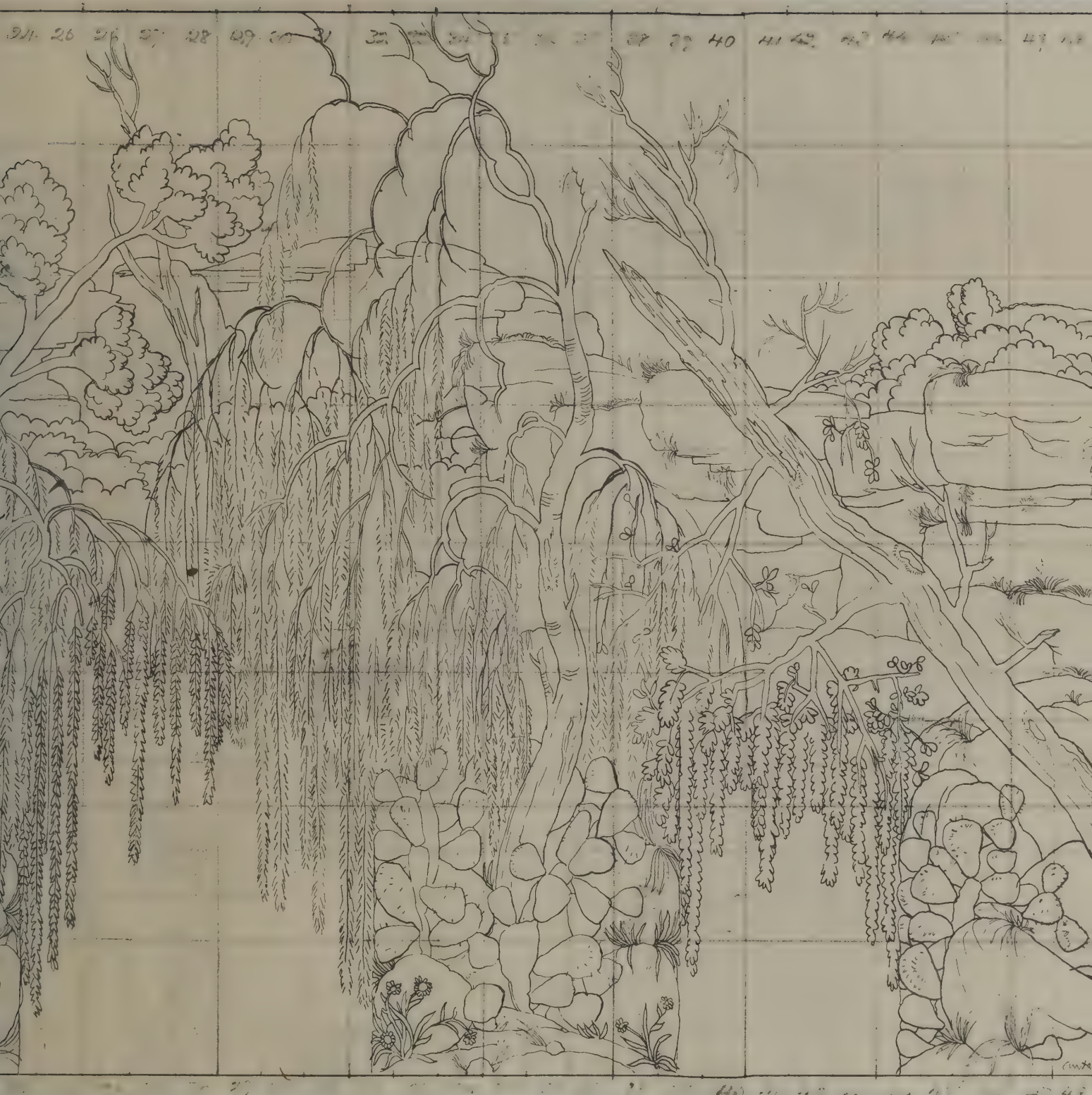
A = Blue band tying hair at base of cap.

Sandals gold - blue bands.

Aubrey R. 1914

4. CURTAIN SCENE
To hang in folds for the jungle
ANDROCLES AND THE LION





5. HERMIONE
THE WINTER'S TALE

T.E.X.

TIME.

T.E.X.

7. PAULINA
THE WINTER'S TALE

Diagram of Cloak

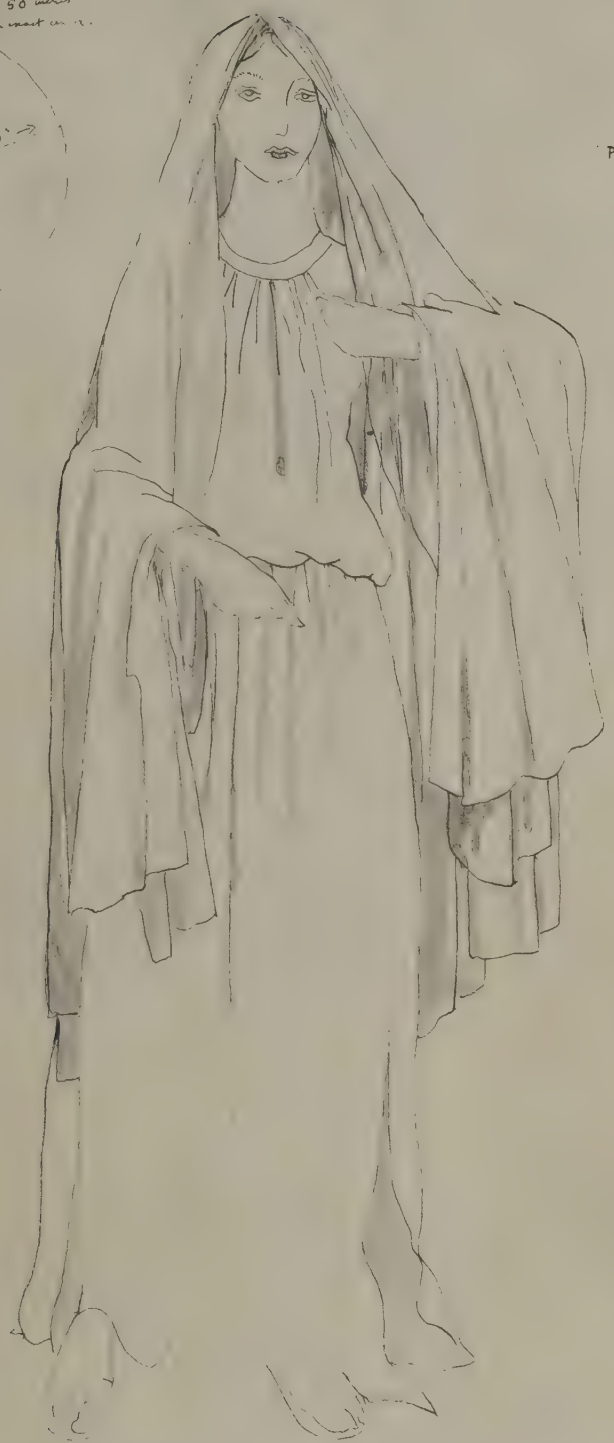
Cut absolutely round
Need 11 inches
circle 50 inches
from inset in c.

50

50

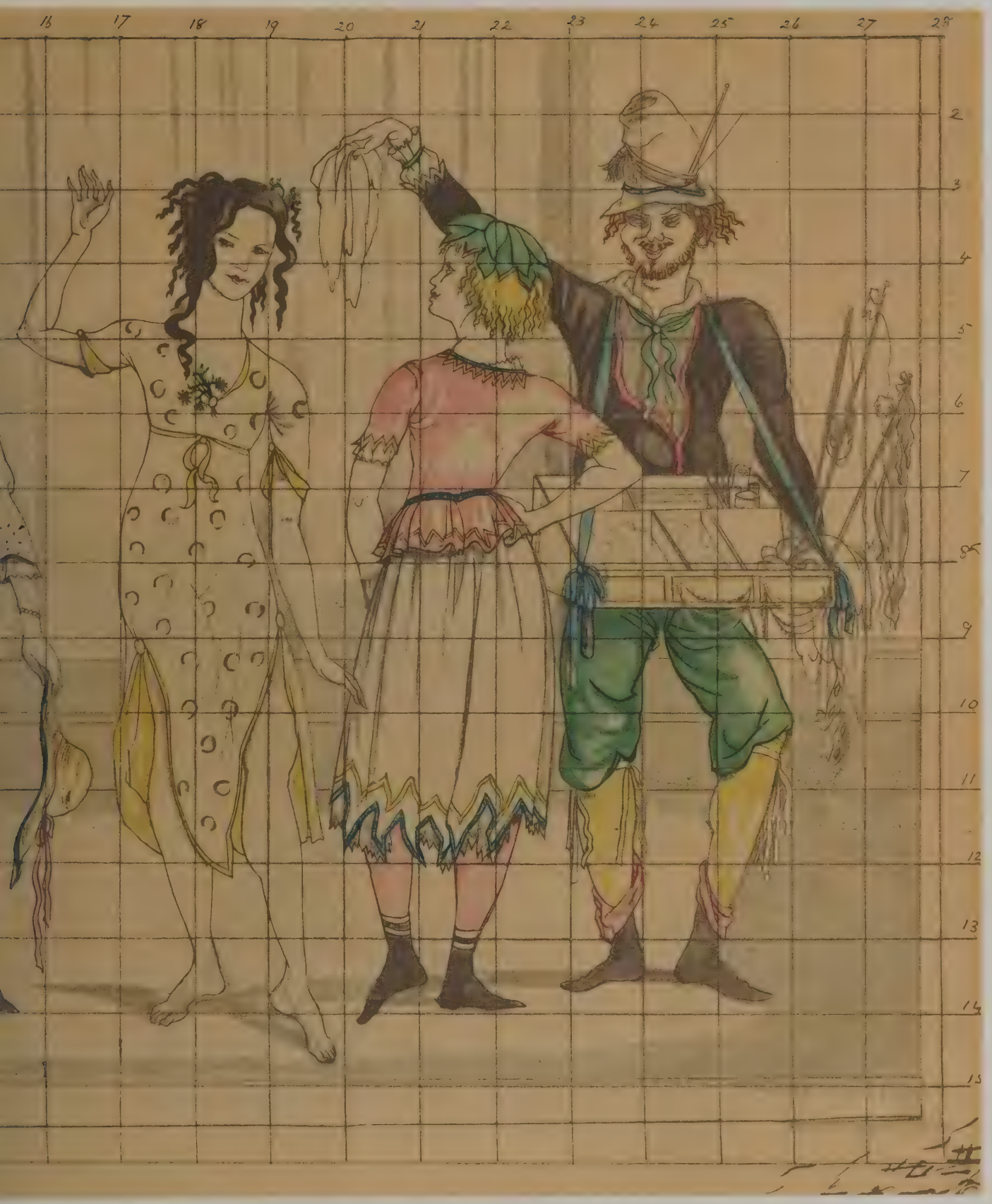
50

Cloak of Black same as dress



Paulina (No C.)
Act V Sc. I
&
Act V Sc III.

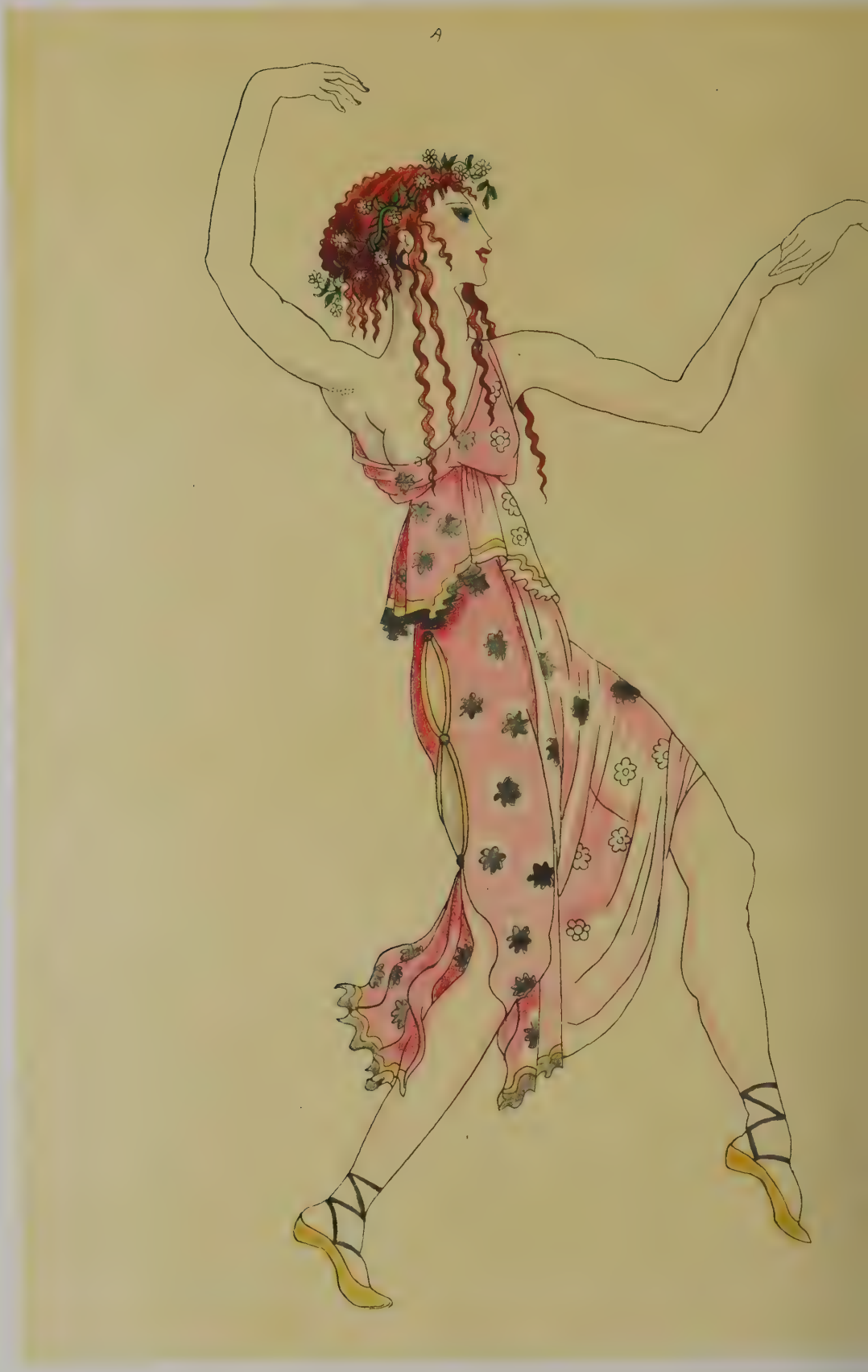
8. MIMES
a group of characters for
THE WINTER'S TALE


16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15

9. FLORIZEL
THE WINTER'S TALE

BACK
A
B
B
A
A
A - A
B - B

10. BACCHANTES
LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE



B

Nos 4 & 5

7. Bacchantes

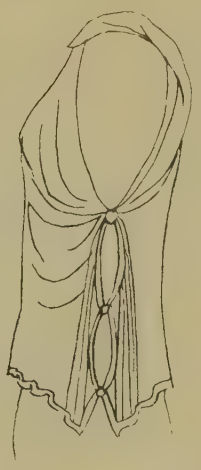
4 of A
3 of B

Leaves of wreath - white -

Necklace - Black -

Buttons on Chiton & shirt -
Black

dresses 191 - [illegible]



Profile of
Chiton
(B)

Laces of sandals - Black (A & B.)

11. CLOWN *and a* PEASANT GIRL
THE WINTER'S TALE

Cap.
Roll on Boot - white
Black Velvet

12. FLORE
LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE

No I

"Flore"

Madame Anna Pavlova.

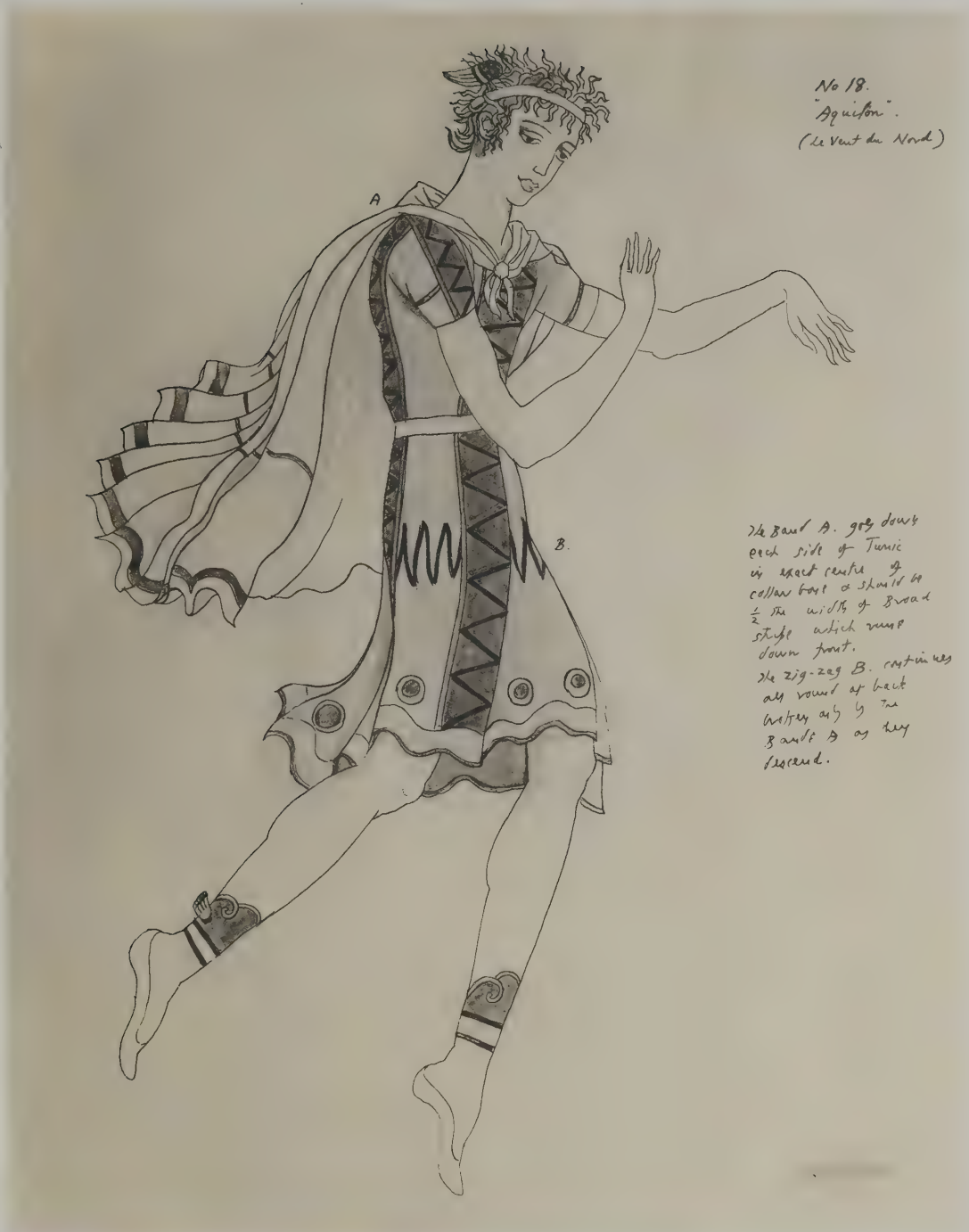
Albert R. Sept 1914.

complete size of flower - side of Bud (two) & stalk (one of)
3½ inches.

spacing marks as in design above in relation to head figure.

Shoes & straps light green
Crown white.
Lace caught white drops &
2 and with lemon yellow.
Buttons on sleeves & skirt
black.

13. AQUILON
LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE


No 18.
"Aquilon".
(Le Vent du Nord)
A
B.
The Band A. goes down each side of Tunic in exact centre of collar bone & shoulder to ½ the width of Broad stripe which runs down front.
The zig-zag B. continues all round at back Getting only ½ the Band A as they descend.

15. HEBE
LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE

Hobe
(No 2)

Le Revue de Paris
Mars 1914

16. DIANA
LE RÉVEIL DE FLORE

No 17.
"Diana".
cut of skirt
silk dead black spots on net skirt
silk silver edged

TEXT
AND COLLOTYPE
ILLUSTRATIONS
ARRANGED, PRINTED
AND BOUND
AT THE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
OXFORD

MCMXXVIII

JOHN JOHNSON
Printer to the University